

**OPTIMUM YIELD FOR VIRGIN ISLANDS
BLACK CORAL FISHERY**

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[Converted to electronic format by Damon J. Gomez (NOAA/RSMAS) in 2003. Copy available at the NOAA Miami Regional Library. Minor editorial changes were made.]

Date: October 1-11, 1979

Purpose: Provide data on black coral growth and mortality to be used in the preparation of an optimum yield estimation for the Virgin Islands Black Coral resource (Report No. 79-5)

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Accomplishments: 300 black coral colonies of two species were observed. They ranged in size from 0.5 mm to 47 mm basal diameter. The length and the width of 100 colonies were measured. The initial plotting of the data indicates that there may be size classes which may represent year classes. These data will also permit an initial estimate of the growth rate equation. Over 95 percent of the colonies in the areas of study were measured on the east slope and west walls. These areas consisted of approximately 130 meters of slope/wall area and were north of the standard excursion areas. The colony density will be estimated from the standard figures of the area. During a followup mission, coral colonies will be remeasured, estimates of recruitment figured, and mortality calculated.